Submission No 50

INQUIRY INTO STRUCTURE AND FUNDING OF THE ARTS, MUSIC, NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY, AND TRANSPORT PORTFOLIOS

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 14 November 2025

I'm writing as one of the Project Controls Directors within the IPE division of Transport for NSW (TfNSW), made redundant under the recent restructure.

My feedback relates to the Infrastructure Project and Engineering (IPE) division only. While I recognise that project roles have defined lifecycles, this restructure raises real concerns about governance, capability, and accountability — especially within IPE and across Project Controls and Commercial functions. The changes, as they stand, could seriously impact TfNSW's ability to deliver infrastructure effectively and responsibly.

1. Leadership Gaps and Lack of Backfill Planning

The departure of several highly capable Executive Directors has left significant capability gaps. Key positions remain unfilled or are temporarily covered by acting Project Directors with less experience and no clear succession or governance plan since July 2025. In some cases, these acting roles involve overseeing sensitive, high-value projects, which introduces obvious delivery, safety, and financial risks.

Contractors have already noticed the thinning of TfNSW's "layer of defence" protecting public money. With fewer experienced project controls professionals and weaker assurance, there's a real risk of more claims and variations — and when gaps appear, external consultants will likely be re-engaged at significantly higher cost, undermining any staff savings.

2. Merging Project Controls and Commercial Functions

The merger of Project Controls and Commercial functions is another major risk area. These two teams have distinct roles: Project Controls manages cost, budget, schedule, risk, and document control, ensuring projects remain within approved baselines. Commercial manages contracts, procurement, and supplier negotiations. Historically, Project Controls served as an independent financial and governance gatekeeper, ensuring that Commercial decisions remained within approved budgets for each project scope. Merging these two functions introduces an inherent conflict of interest, as the same group now oversees both budget control and contract execution. Additionally, commercial function's KPI may also result in the 'cover up' of poor contract and commercial management practices where project controls function would flag risks to Senior Management which are critical leading indicators to mitigate issues from occurring.

This setup weakens transparency, accountability, and objective cost oversight — concerns that were raised during consultation but never addressed.

3. Recruitment Transparency

Post-restructure recruitment has been equally disappointing. Many experienced leaders, including myself, applied for roles with direct alignment of our expertise but were not shortlisted for interviews, while only junior staff (TSSM) were shortlisted for interviews and subsequently promoted instead. Having led major portfolios and built the Project Controls function from the ground up, it's hard to reconcile how experience and proven delivery were overlooked. The process appeared inconsistent and opaque, leading to lower morale and uncertainty about whether merit or internal connections drive decisions.

With the departure of almost the entire Project Controls senior leadership team (around 15 senior professionals), TfNSW has lost substantial institutional knowledge in cost, schedule, and risk management — at a time when strong financial governance is most needed.

4. Request for Review

Given the significance of these changes, I urge Parliament to review:

* Succession planning and capability management

* The conflict of interest implications of merging Project Controls and Commercial functions

* The fairness and transparency of recruitment outcomes

* The long-term financial impact of reduced in-house capability, particularly the increased exposure to contractor claims and external consultancy costs.

My intent is not to criticise individuals, but to help ensure TfNSW maintains strong, accountable infrastructure delivery on behalf of taxpayers.